N 536 - Utilization of Nursing Research in Advanced Practice, Summer 2008

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Research Design

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## Design Characteristics

- Maximizes control over factors to increase the validity of the findings
- Guides the researcher in planning and implementing a study
Level of Control: Quantitative Research

- Descriptive
- Correlational
- Quasi-experimental
- Experimental

Increased Control with Design
Concepts Relevant to Research Design (1)

Causality

A: Pressure \rightarrow B: Ulcer

Multicausality

- Years smoking
- High fat diet \rightarrow Heart disease
- Limited exercise
Concepts Relevant to Research Design (2)

- Probability: Likelihood of an outcome
- Bias: Slanting findings
- Manipulation: Treatment
- Control: All phases of design
Design Validity

- Measure of accuracy of a study

- Examined with critique of the following dimensions:
  - Statistical conclusion validity
  - Internal validity
  - Construct validity
  - External validity
• Controlling the environment of the study setting

• Levels of controlling:
  o Natural setting
  o Partially controlled setting: e.g., clinics
  o Highly controlled setting: e.g., laboratory
Elements of a Strong Research Design (2)

- Controlling the equivalence of subjects and groups
  - Random subject selection
  - Random assignment to groups
Elements of a Strong Research Design (3)

- **Controlling the treatment**
  - Choose a treatment based on research and practice
  - Develop a protocol for implementation
  - Document the implemented treatment
  - Use a check-list to determine the extent of completeness to which the treatment was implemented
  - Evaluate the treatment during the study
## Elements of a Strong Research Design (4)

### Controlling measurement

- Reliability
- Validity
- Number of measurement methods
- Types of instruments
• Controlling extraneous variables

- Identify and eliminate extraneous variables via sample criteria, choice of settings, or research design
- Random sampling
- Sample: Heterogeneous, homogeneous, or matching
- Statistical control
Problems with Study Designs

- Inappropriate for the study purpose or the research framework
- Poorly developed designs
- The research methods were poorly implemented
- Inadequate treatment, sample, or measurement methods
Selecting a Design

Is there a treatment?

Yes

Is the treatment tightly controlled by the researcher?

Yes

Will a randomly assigned control group be used?

No

Is the original sample randomly selected?

Yes

Experimental Study

No

Correlational Design

Yes

Quasi-Experimental Study

No

Will the sample be studied as a single group?

Yes

Descriptive Design

No

Is the primary purpose examination of relationships?
A Typical Descriptive Design

Clarification ➔ Measurement ➔ Description ➔ Interpretation

Phenomenon of Interest

Variable 1

Variable 2

Variable 3

Variable 4

Description of Variable 1

Description of Variable 2

Description of Variable 3

Description of Variable 4

Interpretation of Meaning

Development of Hypotheses
A Comparative Descriptive Design

Group I
{variables measured} → Describe → Comparison of Groups on Selected Variables → Interpretation of Meaning

Group II
{variables measured} → Describe → Development of Hypotheses
Selecting the Type of Correlational Design

- **Describe relationships between/among variables?**
  - Descriptive correlational design

- **Predict relationships between/among variables?**
  - Predictive correlational design

- **Test theoretically proposed Relationships?**
  - Model testing design
A Descriptive Correlational Design

Measurement

Research Variable 1

Description of variable

Examination of Relationship

Interpretation of Meaning

Development of Hypotheses

Research Variable 2

Description of variable
A Predictive Design

Value of Intercept + Value of Independent Variable 1 + Value of Independent Variable 2 = Predicted Value of Dependent Variable
Selecting The Type of Quasi-Experimental Design

- Control Group?
  - No
    - Pretest?
      - No
        - One-group post-test only design
      - Yes
        - Repeated Measures?
          - No
            - Comparison with population values?
              - No
                - Strategy for Comparison
                  - No
                    - Suggest Reevaluating design
                    - One group pretest/post-test design
                  - Yes
                    - Compare treatment & control conditions?
          - Yes
            - Repeated Measures?
Selecting The Type of Experimental Design

- **Pretest**
  - No
    - Post-test only control group design
  - Yes
    - Repeated Measurements?
      - No
        - Examine effects of confounding variables?
          - No
            - Multiple sites?
              - Pretest/post-test control group design
          - Yes
            - Blocking?
              - No
                - Randomized clinical trials
              - Yes
                - Comparison of multiple levels of treatment
                  - No
                    - Examination of complex relationships among variables in relation to treatment
                  - Yes
                    - Nested Designs

Pretest-Post Test, Control Group Designs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Randomly selected experimental group</th>
<th>Randomly selected control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRETEST</td>
<td>PRETEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TREATMENT</td>
<td>POST-TEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TREATMENT</td>
<td>POST-TEST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measurement of dependent variables**

**Manipulation of independent variables**

**Measurement of dependent variables**

**Treatment:** Under control of researcher

**Findings:**
- Comparison of pretest and post-test scores
- Comparison of experimental and control groups
- Comparison of pretest-post-test differences between samples

**Example:** Your self (1990). The impact of group reminiscence counseling on a depressed elderly population.

**Uncontrolled threats to validity:**
- Testing
- Mortality

**Instrumentation:** Restricted generalizability as control increases
### Post-Test-Only Control Group Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement of independent variables</th>
<th>Measurement of dependent variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Randomly selected experimental group</td>
<td>TREATMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POST-TEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randomly selected control group</td>
<td>POST-TEST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Treatment:** Under control of researcher

**Findings:** Comparison of experimental and control groups


**Uncontrolled threats to validity:**
- Instrumentation
- Mortality
- Limited generalizability as control increases
### Pain Control Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional care</th>
<th>PRN Medication</th>
<th>New approach: “Around the clock” medication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit A</td>
<td>Unit B</td>
<td>Unit E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit B</td>
<td>Unit C</td>
<td>Unit F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit C</td>
<td>Unit D</td>
<td>Unit G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit D</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Primary Nursing Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Care</th>
<th>No Primary Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit A</td>
<td>Unit B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit C</td>
<td>Unit D</td>
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<td>Unit G</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Advantages of Experimental Designs

- More controls in design and conducting a study
- Increased internally validity
  - Decreased threats to design validity
- Fewer rival hypotheses
Advantages of Quasi-Experimental Designs

- **More practical**
  - Ease of implementation
- **More feasible**
  - Resources, subjects, time, setting
- **More generalizable**
  - Comparable to practice
Developing the Design Section of Your Proposal

- Identify the design
  - Name it specifically

- Provide a map of the design
- Discuss your rationale for using this design
- Describe threats to the validity of the chosen design